

THE CEA CRITIC

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Language in the New Age

A new era, a new Age began a few days before the 465th anniversary of the landing of Christopher Columbus on an island in the Caribbean Sea. A man-made object took its place, however temporarily, in the sidereal system. Space travel seems now assured.

The nervous speed of Sputnik created a panic in too many minds. In this unexpected test of humanistic training, American leadership came off with a rather low score. Frenzy, crash programs, and crimination and recrimination in blaring headlines drowned the sober analysis required by the occasion.

The old panacea of specialized education was taken from the political medicine chest and prescribed in huge doses in nationwide radio and TV network programs, in magazine and newspaper articles. Dirt soon will fly - quite rightly - and new, larger laboratories will arise.

The question I pose is whether the necessary adjunct buildings will be erected to keep a balance among the natural sciences and technologies, the social sci-

ences, and the humanistic sciences.

Specialization Is Dangerous

A new Age has dawned. The successful European landfall of Columbus proved that man could visit every square inch of the Earth. Ceaseless inquiry into terrestrial space has carried daring adventurers to mountain heights, to the depths of the ocean, and to the frozen polar wastes. Incomplete only in detail but accomplished in major outline has been this examination of the Earth and all that in it is.

The new Age is sending mankind on a similar but larger quest to conquer every square inch of the seemingly illimitable areas of celestial space and all that in it is. In this activity the guiding instrument is the brain of man.

Yet by their very nature these specialized researches can further atrophy portions of the human brain by so exalting some activities and underrating others that whole areas of human learning can again become minor "tool subjects" in the educational process. If the test of signif-

(Please turn to p. 7)

Wise, Ize, Bar and Bug

Our American spirit of enterprise is nowhere so fruitful as in enriching what used to be the Queen's English. The rest of humanity lags far behind, imaginative-wise. Lately this ingenuity seems most exercised suffix-wise.

We hear of things done government-wise, product-wise, pocketbook-wise, wife-wise. Whether the objects so described are wise or not—wise-wise, that is—is beside the point. "Legwise," the observer reports, "she's a candidate for Miss Universe. Otherwise, not so hot." Wise, metaphorized and apotheosized, marches proudly on.

Ize is also popularized. "Let's finalize the deal," the boss tells his crew, who have lagged energy-wise, and energized, they spring into the breach. Our cars are summerized and winterized, our clothes launderized and nylonized and de-mothized, profits maximized and losses minimized, pocketbooks pauperized food vitaminized, toothpaste fluoridized, marriages legalized or formalized or memorialized or fer-

tilized, emotions tranquilized, morals jeopardized or stigmatized.

Bars and rams are burgeoning. The old-fashioned bar which dispensed alcoholic beverages is now augmented by shoe bars, lingerie bars, vitamin bars, puppy bars, lumbar bars. We are no longer content with panoramas, dioramas, and melodramas; we have cineramas, zooramas, automobilaramas, sexoramas.

We're doing a lot with bugs, too. Jitter bug of course is old hat, but litterbug is getting quite a play. Since there are many words ending in *er* applicable to human idiosyncrasies, bug-wise, the possibilities are practically boundless. For instance, gutterbug for the person who inhabs gutters, sputterbug for the sputterer, organizerbug, backbiterbug. Consider the snitterbug, who coughs or sneezes into your face (let's stamp him out!) We also have do-it-yourself-bugs, stay-up-late-night-bugs, speedbugs, lovebugs.

We're doing all right, buggish-wise.

George D. Stephens
Long Beach State College

BROWNING'S GRAMMARIAN, WARTS AND ALL

To take them in descending order, there are in general four kinds of teachers: scholars, scholarly pedants, unscholarly pedants, and educationists, who have not reached the stage of intellectual development at which pedantry becomes possible. Of course the lines between them are not clear, the difference between one and another being most often a matter of degree; therefore I invite you to consider whether Browning's grammarian might not be placed just as appropriately in the second class as in the first. I suggest that Browning himself was of two minds about him.

The chant of praise we hear is a chorus by the grammarian's disciples "singing together," with occasional solo directions such as "(keep the muntain-side, / Make for the city)," "(Hearten our chorus)" and "(Step two a-breast . . .)." It is thus in the nature of a dramatic monologue, revealing the values of the singers as well as those of the master and thereby enabling us to judge their evaluation of him. All commentators thus far have wholly accepted that evaluation. I suggest that Browning's intention was more complex: that he has not given us an idealized portrait, but has painted the grammarian as Lely painted Cromwell, "warts and all."

The disciples are devoted students of grammar, for whom grammar is more important than poetry, since grammar is "work" and poetry is "play." Whatever may be said for this point of view, those who hold it are hardly competent to judge the quality of a poetic performance. Surely they are pedants, however scholarly they may be. A pedant always puts the cart before the horse, if he sees the horse at all.

The disciples' opinion that their master was born with the throat of lyric Apollo—i.e., that he was a natural poet—is therefore not to be taken seriously. The fact is that his practice of poetry, in an age when the practice of poetry was respected, had left him "nameless" at the end of his youth, with only "men's pity" for a life wasted up to that point. Do we pity a man because his youth is over? No; we pity him only if he has failed in his chosen career.

The grammarian, then, had faced the sad fact that he was no poet, and instead of making excuses or wallowing in self-pity had turned from poetry to scholarship, to achieve greatness in another direction.

He had also apparently failed, notwithstanding a face like Apollo's, in the more ordinary affairs of life, since he had not decisively renounced all normal interests but had merely put them aside until he should have enough knowledge and understanding to pursue them with better hope of success:

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Concerned with the problem of faculty recruitment and retention, the Southern Regional Education Board, located in Atlanta, Georgia, is supporting a research project this year which involves an analysis of factors leading to the decision to enter teaching and the decision to leave it. Three academic disciplines are being studied: chemistry, English, and psychology. To be studied are presently employed faculty members in southern institutions, former faculty members, and graduate students.

Locating former faculty members in English has presented the staff of the project with considerable difficulties. Whereas former teachers of chemistry and psychology can usually be located through

their professional associations still carrying these occupational identifications, people who leave teaching in English become editors, publishers, historians, cultural attaches, etc.

This is to request information which will help to insure that English is adequately represented in the study. Anyone who has been a teacher of English at the college level and who is now employed in some other capacity is invited to participate in the study. Information will be collected by means of a brief questionnaire. Anonymity of participants is assured.

Those interested in participating should write to the director of the study whose address is Dr. John W. Gustad, College Teaching Career Project, University Counseling Center, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland.

Dr. Gustad would also welcome leads concerning former college English professors who have left the profession.

I read Mildred Gignoux Downes' article on Remedial Reading in the Nov. Critic with much interest. I have always been interested in the fact that the "scrambled lefties" - the youngsters who are openly or latently left-handed and left-eyed and have been confused between right and left hand - do have spelling problems.

I wish Miss Downes or someone else would do a good article on the subject. I find that my colleagues seem to view my insistence that some of these students do work under what amounts to a physical handicap as just one more proof of my addled mind. Some of them seem unable to comprehend that for some people reading and writing from right to left is as natural as the conventional left to right is for the right-eyed.

If college teachers were at least aware of the problem, they might be a little gentler with these students. I have found that when I take the line that some mistakes are "hand mistakes" and some are "left handed mistakes," the student sometimes feels such a sense of relief to find that he isn't necessarily "dumber" than the rest that the spelling actually improves.

Margaret C. Walters
Univ. of Washington

Henry W. Sams, our new national president, is author of a "guided research" book for the freshman reference paper, *Autobiography of Brook Farm*, just published by Prentice Hall.

In a paper published in *The Rice Institute Pamphlet* for Oct., 1957, J. D. Thomas of Rice Institute states his firm conviction that "The university has nothing to do with the total population." It is his view that junior colleges and other agencies should take care of students unwilling or unable to prepare for college level work, and that colleges must never become merely "grades thirteen through sixteen" of the present system. High school should be to college as the present liberal arts undergraduate college is to the university; a place of preparation for a really rigorous professional education.

The International Federation for Modern Languages and Literatures, meeting in Heidelberg, Germany, last August, devoted its entire program to discussions of style and form problems in literature. Among the papers on English Literature were J. Prescott's "Stylistic Realism in Joyce's *Ulysses*," Lionel Stevenson's "Meredithe and the Problem of Style in the Novel," and J. J. Lynch's "Structural Elements in Fielding's *Tom Jones*."

The 1958 competition for publication in the Yale Series of Younger Poets is open to men and women under forty who have not previously published a book of verse. Manuscripts should be submitted during the month of February, 1958. Address inquiries to the Editor, Yale Series of Younger Poets, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn. The 1957 competition was won by John Hollander, Conn. College. His book, "A Crackling of Thorns," will be published spring of 1958.

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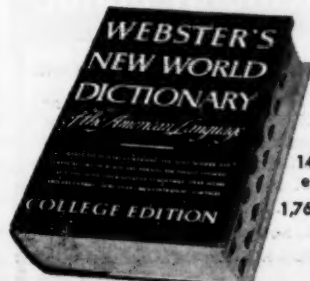
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To Spit Or Not To Spit (A Grammarian's Approach)

The victory over the prescriptive grammarians is now virtually complete. No longer do we glibly and arbitrarily decide that certain expressions are "wrong" or "right." Instead we study the literary history of an expression, its popularity among good writers of today, and its "naturalness." Most important, we recognize a variety of usages as acceptable or standard at different levels of speech and writing.

And now that we English teachers have learned to take a scientific approach to questions of usage and have become masters of the socially appropriate, why should we not teach others to be similarly scientific in questions of propriety in manners and morals? Any modern teacher of English could do a far better job of editing columns on etiquette than the current conductors of those columns do. Consider how helpful we could be in answering letters like the following.

Dear Professor Post:

I am the mother of six darling children, but they spit a great deal. My husband says that spitting is quite natural and that I should not try to change the children's habits, but I am not convinced. Do you think I should teach the children that it is wrong to spit?

Yours anxiously,

Mrs. Annable Lee Schmidt

Dear Mrs. Schmidt:

Forgive me for being blunt, but I must say that your question is extraordinarily naive. You probably expect me to give you a simple rule to follow—as, for example, that it is wrong to spit in public—but I cannot do so.

Our primitive ancestors used to think that questions of social usage could be answered with the use of such labels as "right" and "wrong." Our grandparents moved a very short step forward by saying that one social usage was "preferable" to another. Today we know that social customs must be studied historically and ecologically, and that children who are well brought up must learn at least a dozen levels of usage and propriety for each social act. Some of the questions to be answered then are the following: 1. Did our reputable ancestors spit? 2. Does spitting conform to the essential genius of our people and to the *Zeitgeist* of contemporary mores? 3. Where, and when, and how copiously may one spit?

1. The historical justification for casual expectoration hardly needs documentation. Surely, my dear Mrs. Schmidt, you do not hold yourself superior to President Jackson or to President Grant? Surely you remember the command laid down in the Bible that . . . his brother's wife . . . shall spit in his face (Deut. 25:9) Surely you have read your Chaucer and Shakespeare? Chaucer writes about something which he describes as,

So heinous, that men might on it spit
(Troilus, II, 1, 1617) which means, Mrs. Schmidt, that it was so evil that men could or should spit on it. Shakespeare has one of his most beloved and greatest heroes say at a public trial,

I do defy him, and I spit at him. (Richard II, I, 1, 1. 60) Now who was this hero, Mrs. Schmidt, who spat in public? None other than the Duke of Hereford who later became the great Henry IV, King of England! If it is proper for a great and noble lord to spit in public, can we arbitrarily say that no one should ever spit in public?

I am not saying that these great men whom I have quoted advocated unlimited spitting at all times. Shakespeare, for example, urged desirable cleanliness or aseptis for the receptacle or recipient:

Would thou wert clean enough to spit upon! (Timon, IV, 3, 1. 316) But all through history, great men and small have spat.

2. The naturalness of spitting—and naturalness is always to be sought in custom and language it seems to me—is surely obvious enough. I grant you that some hypermeticulous persons never spit in public, just as some extraordinarily fastidious persons still insist on saying "It is I," and "Whom did you give it to." Far be it from me to condemn them. But we, the ninety-five per cent who occasionally find it desirable to spit in public, must not allow ourselves to be bullied by the die-hards. Some call them antidiluvian fanatics, but I do not go that far.

3. The following fifteen levels of usage are advocated by Smritk-Bjornsen, A. H. Schwarzjahr, and D. Niehgut: (We proceed from the highly informal to the highly formal.)

a. Among free-spitting chewers of tobacco one should spit, even if one is not chewing. Otherwise one will be labeled prim, priggish, precious, pedantic, and—worst of all—a prescriptive sociologist.

b. On winter days in Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and Nashville one must sit, or carry three handkerchiefs, or be quite uncomfortable. It is simplest to spit.

c. In streetcars and other public conveyances, it is more genteel to raise a window and to spit out, rather than to spit on the floor. Of course it is wise to determine the direction of the wind before spitting. If it is too cold to open the window, one should lean far over and quietly spit on the floor.

d. In churches and other public buildings that have wooden or carpeted floors, spitting should be quite limited and discreet. If the ground is covered with sawdust, greater freedom may be exercised.

(To be continued tomorrow. Don't miss Sunday's column in which we analyze the fourteen levels of propriety in "courting" in public.)

H. J. Sachs

Louisiana Polytechnic Institute

"From What I Have Tasted of Desire"

(Extracts from a paper read at the fall meeting of the South Central CEA)

Recently I had the good fortune to study and to serve as an English consultant in diagnosing and interpreting the results of a series of reputedly and nationally known achievement tests that were given to 5500 Louisiana high school students.

The tests revealed that the greatest area of weakness among the high school students was the **Ability to Interpret Literary Materials**. Further, the same tests have been used in colleges and universities throughout the United States and the same results have been revealed—inability to interpret literary materials.

There has been a vociferous claque and clamor about the inadequate instruction in such subject fields as science, mathematics, and pre-engineering in the high schools but the tests suggest conclusively that the contrary is true. It seems reasonable to assume that subjects dealing with science and mathematics are either taught better, or they have been made more attractive to students because students have consistently scored higher in science and mathematics than in any other subject field.

A Good Is Needed!

There is an increasing concern on the part of many informed observers that American college and university students have been and are being almost completely cut off from their cultural and literary heritage not because Johnny Can't Read, but simply because Johnny Has Not Read and Is Not Permitted to Read the great, challenging permanent literary works of western civilization.

Why is this true? As Thoreau said, "I do not wish to flatter my townsmen, nor to be flattered by them, for that will not advance either of us. We need to be provoked—goaded like oxen, as we are, into a trot."

It is true, in large measure, I think, because all too many English professors and English departments have surrendered to the belief that the very greatest classics and even the minor writers in English and American literature are dull and boring to modern youth.

Ways of Submission

And another evil is apparent. To be sure, college English departments have not too generally capitulated to that intellectual sophistical phenomenon called the remedial reading expert as have the high schools, but again there are many people who believe that such a capitulation in large part is not very far away. Certainly an excellent statistical study should be and could be made of the general reading and literary background of the remedial reading experts, but as someone has suggested, it would lead only into that sloganized jungle land of child psychology and educational goobledook.

The general reading anthologies and col-

lections that are now so widely used in the freshman and sophomore courses have become as temporal as yesterday's newspaper because they are largely filled with the topical, the maudlin inspirational, excerpts, tid-bits of the classics, snippets from novels whose blatant and vulgar sermonizings and pleadings are completely revolting to all teachers except the insensitive, the dull, the dumb, the mute.

The too frequent practice of turning the freshman reading course into one of social awareness alone has made the reading-for-pleasure school old fashioned, and there is hardly any place in the program for such gentle people as Miss Phyllis McGinley apparently had in mind when she said, "But there are delightful little fenced fields and flowery culverts where I can rest when I do not wish to climb."

The Neanderthal Man

An article in the August 12, 1957, issue of *The New Republic* entitled "What Johnny Don't Know" points up the problem all the more clearly. The article is based on the replies of "359 college freshmen and sophomores at a large state university in the South."

The students were asked to make brief, telling identifications of such people as T. S. Eliot, Oliver Cromwell, Leo Tolstoy, etc. T. S. Eliot was known by 6% of the 359. I, too, have tried such an experiment dozens of times, and the answers have generally revealed that there is only the slightest awareness on the part of students today of any significant body of knowledge concerning their cultural and literary heritage.

Whenever I made a reappraisal of what most reading programs are doing, I sometimes think of Gletkin, a young, stolid, blindly loyal, fanatical communist, in Kingsley's dramatic adaptation of Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*: "He's something new in the world—the neanderthal man! He came after the flood. He had no umbilical cord to the past. He was born without a navel. He doesn't approve of us old apes in general, and of you in particular."

Great Books

Once I began an academic year by having a freshman class read Mark Van Doren's "Education by Books," and I have seldom seen such excitement, curiosity, or desire on the part of college students. Van Doren suggests that an institution might be founded for the sole purpose of requiring its members to read a list of great books or authors, beginning with Homer and coming down through Einstein—perhaps thirty or forty such. At the end of such a rigorous course he contends the students would surely be educated in the broad sense of the word.

As we skipped back and forth over the list, I could see then, as I have seen countless times since, that most of the members of the class were visibly impressed by the classical names and works. And at the end of the class period several students gathered

around my desk and chattered innocently that such a program was very much what they had expected college to offer. Thereupon I told them that it was a generally agreed upon principle that English teachers were on the whole required to teach entering freshmen to think, to write, to spell, and to fill in grammatical exercises in a workbook.

"From what I have tasted of desire" I left that class pretty much where I found it, and I have since left most of the other classes where I have found them, too.

From what I have seen I am convinced that an introductory college reading program should be directed toward giving students large dosages of the very best classical and neoclassical models.

Teach Excellence

As Nietzsche has said, "Let us confess it, proportionateness is foreign to us." But the reason proportionateness is foreign to us is that we have no centre, no norm, no ideal standard, that is. College students are looking for centres of excellence, for perfection, for the ideal, in a word for the sublime not the mundane, not the transitory or the ephemeral.

From what I have seen they are looking for a centre—one very much like Mr. Van Doren's and one like countless others of the same sort—a truly great books program, not a smattering of late best sellers, soap-box literary vehicles.

When Nietzsche proclaimed, "The last remnant of God on earth are the men of great longing, of great loathing, of great satiety," he was merely suggesting that the intuition is a reliable guide as to what is good and desirable. I suggest to you that students are perfectly capable of detecting gold from brass, great books from inferior books. Whenever we give to college students works of art and verity without

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apology, the response will be convincing.

Beware of Halfheartedness

The half-hearted, the hesitant, the apologetic presentation of the great books by professors who are timid, bored, or apathetic go to make up much of whatever is being offered today by college reading programs.

As Ortega Y. Gasset has said, "Art which—like science and politics—used to be very near the axis of enthusiasm, that backbone of our person, has moved toward the outer rings. It has lost none of its attributes, but it has become a minor issue."

Most college reading programs are charlatanistic affairs for the following reasons:

The lack of inspiration on the part of the instructors, and for that matter even a lack of information concerning a great book at hand.

The tendency to make the reading programs as pedantic and artificial as most freshman writing programs, especially the usage of objective tests or quizzes, devices designed to examine the reader for trifles of setting, character, and plot.

The tendency to be up-to-date by relying on the fashions of the times—the new, or the recent.

The tendency to use current sociological literary selections rather than using and emphasizing the pleasurable by-roads or byways and flowery culverts in literature.

Choose the Best

If we want students to read well, we must choose the very best things for them to read, the recognized best things, and then after they have cultivated a taste for the best things, a habit will have become engrained.

But above all it seems to me that students must see in their instructors what Walter Pater called a "hard, gemlike flame." A New England writer once wrote: "I do not say that John or Johnathan will realize this . . . only that day dawns to which we are awake."

Robert C. Snyder
Louisiana Polytechnic Institute

Patrick G. Hogan, Mississippi State, has been appointed chairman of the English commission of the Miss. Assoc. of Colleges. The commission has recently initiated uniform testing in English for college freshmen and a testing and proficiency program for college juniors. Pat Hogan is also a member of the general composition standards committee of CEA.

Nation's Business for September, 1957, published a survey made by AMA to reveal the characteristics of company presidents. When asked which of their college subjects had given them the most, 43 presidents listed Economics, 39 listed English, 24 listed mathematics, and 17 accounting.

Harry T. Moore, who went from Babson Institute to Southern Illinois University this fall, will be one of the speakers at the Chicago CEA meeting, April 19.

BROWNING'S GRAMMARIAN

(Continued from p. 1)

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,

When he had learned it,

When he had gathered all books had to give!

Sooner, he spurned it.

He did not regard his studies as a part of life; he specifically contrasted them with "actual life," and firmly and repeatedly postponed any further participation in it. He procrastinated "forever," like Guido Franceschini, who at the end of his life lamented

How, ready enough to rise at the right time,

I still could recognize no time mature.

But the grammarian, having faced no particular great crisis, did not lament. Regarding learning as a "means" by which he would live effectively in the future, but also perceiving that there was "No end to learning" (ambiguous line!), he had half-consciously developed into one of those pitiable souls—bureaucrats, clerks, misers, pedants—for whom the means become the end.

He deliberately refused to distinguish between the important and the trivial—"Prate not of most or least"; he relished those very "crumbs" of learning that make robust natures—Browning's for example—"feel queasy." He was born to analyze everything and synthesize nothing.

Dead from the waist down, important in vital matters, abandoning any pursuit of great things, he sought little things to do, "w them and did them; to the end of his life he went on adding one to one—Hoti, Oun, the enclitic De—executing the parts long after he had ceased to image the whole, at least as far as this world was concerned.

Trusting death rather than life, persuading himself that God valued such piecemeal efforts as his and would reward them with plenitude of knowledge in the heavenly period, he lived and died "Loftily lying." Browning was always rich in irony. Like the Mesabi range.

And yet. And yet. Surely this interpretation is too simple to be the whole, ironic truth. To contradict the disciples flatly would be as unperceptive as to take their estimate at face value. Surely the disciples, blind as they were to the evidence before them, unaware as they were of the implications of what they were saying, were not merely dupes, were not altogether deceived; and surely the grammarian was not merely or altogether self-deceived.

From whatever motives, he did have a passion for knowledge; within whatever limits, he did live intensely; he did pursue a great thing—the whole of knowledge, text and comment—even while recognizing that it was unattainable; and he pursued it greatly, with abandon, sacrificing—if not by conscious intention, certainly in fact—all the rest of life to it.

In this he was a bigger man than the

inhabitants of the vulgar thorpes who had more realistic goals, the low men who might have said to him as cynically as Bishop Blougram,

I am much, you are nothing; you would be all,

I would be merely much—you beat me there.

He did beat them. He was not nothing, though what he was they lacked vision to see. He was a scholar of a high order, who succeeded in communicating something of his own passion to his students. And his researches, his discoveries, though minute, were not trivial. If he did not, as the disciples thought, "magnify the mind, show clear / Just what it all meant," he did at least clear up certain points essential to accurate reading of the Greek texts.

To distinguish between but and toward, between that and as, and to establish the various connections in which the same particle may mean accordingly, surely, but still, or-soever, is not unimportant. In this the scholar was not sterile. His modest seed contributed to the fuller life of a more urbane scholar, Browning's father, and flowered in the poetic mind of the son.

J. Mitchell Morse,

Pennsylvania State University

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School For Censorship

Censorship, organized and unorganized, has a history as long as literature itself. It takes little imagination to envision an ancient Greek mother sheltering her children from public recitation of Homer's *Odyssey* on the grounds that Ulysses' adventure with the one-eyed giant, Polyphemus, gave her youngsters nightmares, or the hero's stay on the isle of Circe introduced her son to adultery. Parental censorship, of course, is a field unto itself, and criticism of such censorship is very likely an invasion of family privacy and the more or less sacrosanct area of the home, and thus will not be considered here.

Public censorship goes in cycles, and for the most part, literature has survived these periodic waves of indignation by the trained or untrained; men fall in love, seduce women, and decide to kiss and tell; men are attracted to crime and villainy and are inclined to write about this, too.

Readers, apparently, will always be found who derive vicarious pleasure from these accounts; censors, apparently, will always be found who derive satisfaction from limiting the pleasures of others.

Underlying all censorship is the general belief that literature is apt to give the young and impressionable ideas they never would get on their own—a belief that seems to discount entirely back-alley learning, or ideas encountered via direct observation and example.

Fortunately, censorship through the centuries has usually been on a fairly high level of competence. That is to say, starting with Plato's remarks in *The Republic*, skipping on to Gosson's *School of Abuse* (1579), and then to Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality of the English Stage* (1698), we have had censorship by people who, if not uniformly brilliant, were quite articulate.

We could feel fairly safe that the remarks of the Olympian Plato might at least be worth pondering. Stephen Gosson, himself, was a satirist and playwright—not a great one, to be sure, but at least he was familiar with the problems of the writing trade. Collier was a clergyman, and had considerable schooling for his period.

Today, however, we find many untrained people who somehow manage to get themselves into positions wherein they can pass on to the public their rather shaky literary judgements.

Take, for example, the pharmacists of Wisconsin.

On September 19, 1956, the *Capital-Times* of Madison, Wisconsin, reported in its news columns that the druggists throughout the state had decided not only to censor literature themselves, but to encourage hit or miss censorship among their patrons by posting the following notice near their pocket book and magazine stands:

"Attention parents and customers. The Pharmacists of Wisconsin . . . pledge their cooperation to prohibit the sale of obscene

literature in drugstores. Occasionally some objectionable material may be overlooked. Therefore . . . please call our attention to any item you think objectionable. It will be removed immediately and its sale discontinued."

Granted that censorship, like the poor, will very likely always be with us, and granted, too, that some of it might conceivably be understandable, worthwhile, salubrious, or beneficial, depending upon one's point of view.

But as long as society feels this periodic need for censorship, then society, to protect itself, should provide for the training of skilled censors. We can't always trust to fate that literary censorship will fall into the hands of an articulate Plato or a supreme court judge as capable as the one who in 1934 ruled on the publication and sale of Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Certainly then, in the 20th century, a school for censorship is in order. A doctor's degree in the field of Humanities, plus an M.A. in English, journalism, and plus advanced study in law, should be the very minimum educational requirements for the job of public censor.

Then, too, the very act of establishing an official school of public censorship will require us to examine our motives, our cultural philosophy, and our basic values—a healthy activity in itself—after which, it is hoped, we might be too embarrassed to continue. For you see literature, after all, is but a mirror of life and reality, and thus a school for censors can only lead, logically, to a school for the censorship of human behavior and reality itself.

But if this school of ours is finally established, then every community will have the opportunity to hire, say, a board of five highly trained graduates, who will then advise the local judge, politician, pharmacist, or religious leader, in regard to what book is, or what book is not obscene, etc., taking into account such factors as the work as an artistic whole, the work in its relation to a Puritan-orientated community, the work in its relation to a decadent community, the work in its relation to a whole gamut of sociological and economic forces that do not readily meet the untrained eye.

Very likely our school for censors will never turn out a Plato, or even a Gosson—but society will be a step ahead, to be sure, of the Wisconsin drugstore variety of "Censorship."

L. W. Michaelson
Univ. of Idaho

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LANGUAGE IN THE NEW AGE

(Continued from p. 1)

icance is to be only the practical contribution a discipline can make to the perfecting of gadgets, the old, narrow, visionless, unimaginative view of knowledge will prevail.

Will We Lose Our Souls?

If myopic eyesight again becomes the norm in educational planning, as it was twice in wartime situations within our memory, the humanistic studies are in for a rough time. The Graces are exiled in war, and humane learning is told to get thee to a nunnery. The relentless demands for speedy production of this or that widget crowd out commonsense, the balanced view, and a sober realization that purposive life must go on.

The gravest danger confronting us is not that we humanists may lose our jobs but that we may lose our souls. Natural as it seems to be to run with the pack, we descend to equality with our fellow primates when we do so. The hour needs large thought, incisive thought.

The quintessential agency lifting us above the other animals is language. Only man can maneuver signs into symbols and achieve thought. Only man has the wonderful instrument of abstract reasoning language.

Foolish Scholasticism

But, strangely, man has been slow to understand this instrument. Scholasticism continues to incant a verbal abracadabra that makes a mystery of the most human of all human activities. In a world of system, only language is treated as unsystematic. Of all our knowledges only language is viewed as a medieval chaos of atoms moving without order. The 600,000 and more entries in a dictionary appal or mystify us. A foolish scholasticism bids us talk of loose, balanced, and periodic sentences, of language operating one word at a time, and of concepts like that of parts of speech that hide more than they reveal.

As long as language is deemed a miracle, a fathomless mystery, the humanistic scholar remains a priest of a strange cult, not a creative contributor to man's progress.

Simple Structure

We now know that a language is a system whose structure points, says Edgar Mayer of Wayne State University, number fewer than 800. A structure point is a significant, recurring item in a system.

Our speech sounds in phonemic analysis are fewer than fifty, fewer than the keys and levers on a typewriter, surely a manageable number. Our manipulated items in printed language - alphabetic letters, numbers, punctuation marks, and type variants - are fewer than the keys and pedals on a piano.

The significant differences in form and in syntactic arrangements are few in number. The 300 language words, the gears and cams of language machinery, when viewed against the vast vocabulary, are but a minute portion of the total dictionary. The whole system is so simple in the code of speech that any child of six can literally back his parents into a corner until only sheer physical force subdues him.

System, Tune and Words

In the order of descending importance language has three elements: system, tune, and "words." The system is carried out by the machinery, the tune is created by the stress patterns inherent in the machinery, and the words - like the various kinds of paper running through printing presses - are the occasional items that take on meaning as the system and tune give them tension and meaning.

Only as words occur in structure of syntax, rhetoric, and sound do they have any meaning. This idea comes as a shock to many minds. Yet when one lists alphabetically the words in a sentence, this fact becomes apparent. For example, a, beauty, forever, joy, of, is, thing form a

dead, inert list, but "A thing of beauty is a joy forever" achieves tension and meaning through syntax.

Words do not make a language; system does. The system in language is syntax and its vocal accompaniment, tune. Only as this wholesome truth is grasped can the relative unimportance of "words" be understood.

Hope for the Future

This new Age calls upon us to put the system of language in relationship to the system of thinking called logic. If — and there is no if about it — the humanizing agency of man is the system of language, it stands to reason that there must be a psychology and philosophy of language study and use inherent in the language system.

Only as we teachers of language slough off the mantle of scholasticism and adopt the new view of language as a system, can we take our proper central position in the emerging educational pattern. Only as we see language as the science which has made all other sciences possible can we fruitfully participate in the new Age. Then humanistics will not be shunted into a parking lot for the duration of the emergency. And then the new buildings for the humanistic sciences will raise beside the new laboratories.

Harry R. Warfel
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New England CEA Fall Meeting

In spite of the flu, some 150 CEAs attended the fall meeting of the New England CEA on October 26 at American International College in Springfield, Massachusetts.

At the opening session, chaired by Muriel Hughes of the Univ. of Vermont, officers for next year were elected: Hilda Fife, Univ. of Maine, president; Curtis Dahl, Wheaton, and Leonard Dean, Univ. of Conn., vice-presidents; Wylie Sypher, Simmons, George Anderson, Brown, and Samuel French Morse, Trinity, directors; and Charles Owen, Univ. Conn., treasurer.

Admiral John F. Hines, president of American International College, welcomed the group. The chief address of the general session was given by Lionel Trilling of Columbia University, who spoke on "English Literature in American Education."

Professor Trilling described some of the good features in the trend away from the study of English literature, but maintained also that this trend is an expression of the anti-intellectualism of our culture. The current fad for world literature courses reaches the point in its uncritical admiration for all cultures of suggesting that there are no standards of excellence; and the concentration on American literature overlooks the fact that there are some things a new literature simply cannot supply—a real language sense, for instance, and a sense of the relation of literature to institutions and ideas.

This challenging appeal for the preservation of English literary studies as a crucial part of our culture which gives us perspective and discipline provoked a great deal of discussion and set the mood for the remainder of the day's program.

During the afternoon six discussion sessions were available. The question of usage was taken up by a dictionary maker (Philip B. Gove), a newspaper editor (Paul F. Craig), and a college teacher (Milton Birnbaum), and the group was shown through the Merriam Webster building in Springfield.

Audio Aids to College English was the topic of a second session. George Probst of the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation and Max Bilderssee of the N. Y. State Education Department were anxious to learn from the teachers what kind of recorded material they found most useful. Jack Summerfield discussed his experienc-

es with the Boston educational station WGBH. Leland Varley and Sidney Kaplan, both from the Univ. of Mass., described classroom uses for the tape recordings of living American poets and writers prepared at the University of Massachusetts. There was a lively general discussion of the problems the teacher faces in integrating recorded material into class work.

In a discussion of high school versus college English, two high school teachers, one private and one public, presented their ideas about the colleges, and Caesar L. Barber of Amherst described the way in which the Amherst plan attempts to move freshmen into a realm of precise and accurate discourse. Roberta Graham of MacDuffie School in Springfield appealed to college teachers to avoid repetition of high school assignments in college work, and Edwin Smith from Classical High School in Springfield begged the colleges to raise their standards. Once parents find out that poorly prepared students cannot get into college, he maintained, popular pressure will force the high schools to improve their own work. He accused the colleges of letting "too many camels into the tent."

Other topics considered during the busy afternoon were "Dramatic Values," discussed by a literary historian, Fred Millett of Wesleyan University; a theater director

from Springfield College, Emile Schmidt; and a critic, Ihab H. Hassan, of Wesleyan University; and "The Writer, the Critic, the Teacher: How About the Student?", a consideration of creative writing led by Sydney R. McLean of Mount Holyoke and Samuel French Morse of Trinity. Arthur Mann of the department of history at Smith College and Sylvan Schendler of the Smith English department concluded the day's sessions by describing the rationale and effect of a course they presented at the Univ. of Mass. during the summer which combined a literary and a historical treatment of America between the wars.

Lines to an Over Analyzed Nightingale

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Dept. of Amplification
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O Keats! What's this noise I hear?
Hagurr, gurr, coliqui, zozoz, tzatu.
Quick! Slam the magic casements to!
For darkling I listen with outraged ear.
Singest of Summer in full-throated ease?
Such alien sounds must grind, in truth,
Through the saddened heart of Ruth
While goll, zozoz, hezeze, you wheeze.
L. W. Michaelson
Moscow, Idaho

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